

CHRISTMAS TREE PROMOTION BOARD

Board Meeting

May 20, 2021

Via Video Conference

Welcome and Roll Call: The meeting was called to order at 11:01 a.m. Eastern Daylight time by Chairman, Roger Beyer.

Board Members in Attendance: Mark Schmidlin, Derek Ahl, Gary Westlake, Charles Fowler, Jane Neubauer, Chuck Berry, Bob Schaefer, Roger Beyer, Bill Brawley, Mike Cocco, and Larry Downey

Board Members not in Attendance: Renee Campbell

USDA Representative(s) in Attendance: Sue Coleman and George Webster

Staff in Attendance: Marsha Gray, Cyndi Knudson, and Jenny Tomaszewski

Guest(s) in Attendance: Frans Kok

Agenda:

It was **MOVED** by Gary Westlake and **SECONDED** by Charles Fowler to approve the Agenda as presented.

MOTION APPROVED.

Meeting Minutes:

It was **MOVED** by Charles Fowler and **SECONDED** by Chuck Berry to approve April 15, 2021 Board meeting minutes as presented. **MOTION APPROVED.**

Committee Reports

Finance – Marsha Gray reported for Bob Schaefer.

- A brief overview of the April 2021 financial statement was provided. Gray pointed out a few items within the report:
 - At the last Board meeting in April, the Board approved a budget amendment. However, it is not reflected in the April financial statement - the budget will be revised in the May statement.
 - At the end of April, the assessment income was \$1,729,939.55, as of May 19, 2021, it was \$1,738,983.80.
 - Under Misc. The operating expense line is over budget by \$1,000 due to former board members' thank you gifts.

It was **MOVED** by Derek Ahl and **SECONDED** by Charles Fowler to accept the April 2021 Financials as presented. **MOTION APPROVED.**

Research – Mark Schmidlin requested Cyndi Knudson report

- The RFP process is currently open for the Research Grant Proposal. All Proposals are due back by June 18th. The Committee will review the submissions and present their recommendations to the Board at the in-person meeting in August. The proposal application is posted on the website.
- The Research Portal is making headway in the set-up process.
- Seedling Survey - round two is being assembled and will be mailed in Mid-July.

Industry Relations – Gary Westlake reported

- Industry Relations committee and some members of the Promotion Committee are planning to help provide Retail Locator sign up information and other details on promotional campaign at state and regional meetings.

Governance – Charles Fowler reported

- The Committee has a Zoom meeting scheduled for Monday, May 24, 2021.

Promotion – Bill Brawley reported

- “Big Idea” meeting where both agencies present their suggestions and recommendations for the 2021 campaign scheduled for June 8 and 10.
- Consumer Survey went live earlier this month – expect top-line results in the next week or two. A more in-depth Discussion Board project will follow.
- Concept Farm has been busy with the pre-season work that was approved – this work focuses on:
 - Possible revisions/improvements to the consumer website.
 - Improvements to the Retail Locator and sign-up process.
 - Outreach campaign to wholesale growers; encouraging them to share with their retail customers.
 - Pre-season social posts.
- Two small working groups were involved in providing input:
 - Social media team – participated in a brainstorming and feedback session with Concept Farm.
 - Wholesale advisory team – provided insights and feedback to Concept Farm team in preparing the Wholesaler outreach.
- The Committee has had several meetings with Chuck Toombs and the Computer Science student group from OSU on an app that they are proposing for the CTPB.

Compliance Committee – Derek Ahl reported

- Jason Hanselman has been working with Marsha Gray – Hanselman has made roughly 200 phone calls and collected \$11,400 to date. Gray shared that Hanselman has been working to collect from growers who are late reporting for the 2020 harvest season and is also working on getting inconsistent payers to pay for missed years. Ahl and Gray will continue to meet with Hanselman.
- Compliance Audit – Marsha Gray reported that CPA auditor, Jim Lantz, is in the process of scheduling and completing audits. Four of the ten audits have been completed - anticipating that all ten audits will be conducted by the end of June.
- A question was raised as to what Region audits are conducted? Marsh Gray shared that all audits are conducted in the United States and are scattered in all Regions.

Management Staff Updates – Marsha Gray reported

- A brief overview of the assessment collection report was provided. As of May 19, 2021, a total of \$1,657,106.61 has been received. Gray shared that it is hard to compare the assessment report on a year-to-year basis based on how the report is produced.
- A request was made to include Exempt growers on the Assessment Collection Report.
- Electronic Reporting and Payment System – Gray and Roger Beyer have been communicating with three different companies that feel they can run the reporting/payment system, FireFall, SCS (a recommendation from Pinnacle Bank), and a small firm out of Minneapolis. Gray wrote a scope of work for the three companies - the Executive Committee is currently reviewing it. Within the next week, they will be sending it to the three potential candidates.
- Summer Meeting Schedule – Gray shared that it is essential to be at as many Summer Association meetings as possible with no Winter or Summer meetings in 2020. Gray or Board members are currently scheduled to attend the following Summer meetings: Maryland (Gary Westlake and Cyndi Knudson representing), Mid-America, New York, Michigan, North Carolina, Southern, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Pacific Northwest, Ohio. Gray shared that they are hoping to have volunteers from the Industry Relations Committee and Promotion Committee to host a table for guests to ask questions and sign up on the locator.
- Board Nomination update – Gray stated there are three seats up for appointment, two in the West and one in the East. USDA requires that they provide two names for every open seat. Currently, there are no nominations. Nominations are due by June 1st.
- A question was raised to Sue Coleman why USDA requires the Promotion Board to come up with nominations when it is difficult to find candidates to run opposite incumbents? Sue Coleman shared in the CTPB Order (7 CFR §1214.41) it sets forth that – Nominations will be conducted by the Board, and it is required that the Board submit two nominees for each open seat.

- Roger Beyer requested Charles Fowler, chairman of the Governance Committee, to submit to the Board possible revisions to the Order regarding nominations.
- Board discussion regarding nominations for the three open seats.

Old Business – No new items to report.

New Business

- Management Evaluation – Roger Beyer compiled all the evaluation scores, giving each category a five-point scale. Marsha Gray commented on the review – stating that she appreciates the support from the Board.

It was **MOVED** by Bob Schaefer and **SECONDED** by Bill Brawley to approve a contract with Gray Management with Marsha Gray continuing to serve as the Executive Director in the amount of \$210,000 for the fiscal year of August 2021-July 2022. Jane Neubauer asked if the contract included staff members Jenny Tomaszewski and Cyndi Knudson. Gray confirmed that it did. **MOTION APPROVED.**

USDA Report – Sue Coleman Reported

- A follow-up to the US Customs collections offers - the Pecan Industry has decided to defer the collections offer CTPB made to the American Pecan Promotion Board, which has not been appointed. No decisions have been made.
- Coleman mentioned that diversity is a big agenda for the new Secretary, Tom Vilsack.

For the Good of the Order – Announcements

- Franks Kok asked the Research Committee if there is any research being conducted on the effect of Global Warming on conifers? Mr. Kok stated that it is becoming impossible to grow Blue Spruce and Douglas Fir in Virginia, which were some of his biggest sellers before the needlecast disease infected these species in his area.
- Roger Beyer requested Jenny Tomaszewski reach out to the Research Committee to obtain a written response that could be provided to Mr. Kok.

Meeting Schedule

- The next Board Meeting will be held on June 17, 2021, at 11:00 a.m. Eastern Daylight time.
- Plans for the August 5, 2021, in-person Board meeting in West Jefferson, North Carolina:
 - Arrive in time for dinner on Wednesday, August 4th.
 - All-day CTPB Board meeting on Thursday, August 5th.
 - Friday, August 6th, and Saturday, August 7th, is the North Carolina meeting.
 - A hotel block is being held at the Holiday Inn in West Jefferson, NC. Flight options are Asheville, Charlotte, Greensboro, or Raleigh. Please provide your travel schedule to Jenny Tomaszewski as she will be making your hotel reservation. When the meeting is complete, all expenses can be turned in on a travel reimbursement form.
 - A suggestion was made to host a combined meeting with North Carolina Board and NCTA.

Adjourn:

It was **MOVED** by Charles Fowler and **SECONDED** by Mark Schmidlin to adjourn the meeting. **MOTION APPROVED.**

Chairman Roger Beyer adjourned the meeting at 12:50 p.m. Eastern time.

Respectfully Submitted,

Gary Westlake
Secretary